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the owlet decided that he had had enough and flew off, easily outstripping the few shrikes that set off in pursuit.

To us the strange feature of this particular mobbing was the single species involved and the apparent unconcern of the owlet, for he could have easily flown away from the shrikes at the start. Then there was the absence of even a ruffled feather, let alone feathers flying. However, the one shrike that actually hung onto the inverted owlet certainly indicated more serious intent and not simply demonstration.

Geoffrey & Dorothy Irvine, "Lakeside", Box 1356, Naivasha.

WHITE-HEADED WOOD HOOPES NESTING

In January 1991, whilst on a visit to Kinondoni Lodge, Mt. Kenya at the top of the Chogoria Track, a family of White-headed Wood Hoopoes *Phoeniculus bollei* were found feeding young in a well hidden and deep recess in a large *Podocarpus* sp. tree.

As usual the birds gave themselves away by their frequent and fairly regular to-ing and fro-ing through the trees. It was not difficult to find the nest tree as their frequent calling helps to keep track of them

In company with Mr John Wright we watched the feeding for not less than an hour and a half and noted that more than two birds took part in the provision of food. That is to say that this was a group effort. All the feeding birds appeared to be fully adult, but there did appear to be difference as to which birds actually presented the food, for some went rapidly into the nest cavity, whilst others apparently had to hand the offering over to a second adult who then disappeared with it into the hole. It was not possible to determine whether it was always the same birds that acted in the same manner. No faecal sacs were seen to be removed. The birds took little notice of us sitting about ten metres below and flashing our cameras at them.

Group feeding seems to be more frequent in such intensely social birds than in others. We have noted the same amongst Retz's Red-billed Shrikes *Prionops retzii* at the coast.

Geoffrey & Dorothy Irvine, "Lakeside", Box 1356, Naivasha.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

I am 39 years old and was severely disabled with a spinal injury suffered in 1981 whilst working as a nurse, with the result that I have next to no mobility. I have just completed my BA degree at home but because of my disability and the consequent extreme pain I continuously suffer I cannot do my Higher Degrees (BA with Honours and MA) in the subjects that I would wish to do in the normal way, because of the field work that is involved.

However, I have been given one chance of doing my Higher Degrees. Over the next 4 to 6 years I have to complete, and pass, a number of in depth research/thesis papers. For all papers, except the first, I am given a choice of subjects. With the first paper the subject is set for me. This is to show the examiners that, despite my disability, I can do the in-depth research that will be required for the remaining papers.

Because of my circumstances I am on a very restricted income and although I have a

grant, which covers three quarters of my fees, I cannot either buy books or easily get access to research libraries. Therefore, I have to try all other sources to obtain the information that I need to help to complete the papers. I have to pass all the papers but the first one is the most important of all, and it is this first paper that is causing me the most urgent problems for which I desperately need any help I can obtain.

The subject for my first paper is as follows:-

I am to do in depth research into an unidentified animal of the Likouala Swamp Region of the Congo and of other parts of Africa. The animal has no scientific name but is known to local people under a variety of names including MOKELE MBEMBE, CHIPEKWE etc. My research *must* include the following:

1. To gather all reports of the animal known as Mokele Mbembe, Chipekwe etc., I am then to try and identify the animal.
2. To gather all reports of other identified animals.
3. From all reports/information, I am to look into the possibility that Mokele Mbembe, Chipekwe etc., is a form of giant Monitor Lizard, possibly related to the Komodo Dragon of Indonesia.
4. To look into the possibility that Mokele Mbembe, Chipekwe, etc. is an age old part of the myths and legends of the various African countries.
5. The Mokele Mbembe, Chipekwe is always reported in very remote inhospitable regions, where very few Westerners have entered. I am to look into the possibility that Mokele Mbembe, Cipekwe is, in fact, an animal already known to science, that has grown much larger than normal, because of the remoteness of the area it is alleged to inhabit.

I know that I have a great deal of research to do for this first paper. But my Tutor-Counsellor tells me that the examiners have deliberately set this as a subject for the first paper, as they feel that if I can complete and pass this paper, despite my disability, I should have no trouble completing the remaining papers.

One of the very few books that my local library have been able to get for me stated that the *Journal of the East Africa and Uganda Natural History Society* 1913. Vol. 3 No. 6. carried a paper by C.W. Hobley 'On some unidentified Beasts'.

Therefore, could I please ask for your valuable help in the following ways:-

1. Could you please let me have a copy of the above paper.
2. Could you please let me have any other information that you may have about the Mokele Mbembe, Chipekwe etc.
3. Could you please let me have any information about mystery lake animals/monsters in Africa.
4. Could you please let me have the names and addresses of any Journal, magazine etc., anywhere in the world, that you feel may be able to help me with my research,

5. Could you please let me have the names and addresses of any Institute or organisation , anywhere in the world, that you feel may be able to help me with my research and any other information that you feel may be of value.

Although I know that I may be asking a great deal, I would deeply appreciate any help that you or your Members can give me with the above.

Peter Kanabar, 12 Muirfield Close, South Oxhey, Watford, Herts WD1 6LT. U.K.

The above letter was recently received from Mr Peter Kanabar and is self explanatory. He has been sent a copy of the paper 'On some unidentified Beasts' which includes descriptions of the 'Nandi Bear' as well as descriptions of a lake and river beast said to inhabit "certain of the rivers running into Lake Victoria and the lake itself", as well as other notes about the Chemosit or Nandi Bear.

Should any members be able to assist Mr Kanabar, their help would be greatly appreciated and we wish him all success with his project.

Editor.

Dear Sir,

I have had a pair of Variable Sunbirds in my garden for the last five years. They are very tame and the female roosts in the Golden Shower on my verandah at night.

They have nested several times, always near my house but, for the last two years or so, each time the eggs hatch the young are attacked and killed by a Bronze Sunbird (who only appears at this time). The first time it killed a pair of babies, male and female, when they had started growing feathers; the second time a single female at about the same stage. In between the 'variable' managed to raise a female but the 'bronzy' was around for a couple of weeks, obviously hoping to get at it. The parents always get very distressed when it is around, and definitely call for my help (once after dark) by fluttering at my window, to chase it off.

I assume that the 'bronzy' is trying to limit the population of 'variables' but I have never heard of this before. I saw the 'bronzy' in action the first time, but reached the nest too late to help. It flies against the nest, and simply pecks at the heads of the fledglings - grotesque behaviour for such a beautiful bird.

I would much appreciate views on this from people more knowledgeable than myself, with possible suggestions as to how to prevent it happening next time.

Linda Brown, Box 25198, Nairobi. (Tel. 561112).

Dear Sir,

I wonder if any of your members have visited Kaya Kinondo? It is a naturalist's delight - a patch of mature forest growing on damp coral rag immediately behind Kinondo Beach, just south of Diani.

The Kaya, like many others along the coast, is a sacred wood to the local Digo people. It is also a refuge for some of the rarer birds and small mammals which frequent coastal forest.

Immense mature trees abound, with some spectacular Mvule *Chlorophora excelsa*, enormous and aged Mkungu *Terminalia catappa* and various other typical trees of wet coastal forest such as Baobab, *Ficus lutea* and *Sorindeia obtusifoliolata*.